



# MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS

## *Peace, Social Justice and Integrity of Creation*

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### **Maryknoll Missioners Call for Border Policies that Welcome Migrants**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Maryknoll missioners serving on the U.S.-Mexico border express their opposition to immigration and border provisions in the Senate's supplemental spending package, in particular numbers that trigger closure, fast track asylum processes stripped of judicial review, inappropriately high standards of proof for asylum eligibility, funds for border wall construction, and a massive increase in funding for immigration detention.

“As missioners dedicated to welcoming and supporting immigrant families and individuals on a daily basis, we firmly believe that provisions in the supplemental do not live up to the United States’ values and legal obligations,” **said Susan Gunn, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.** “The mass detention of asylum seekers and the return of those seeking asylum to a place where their life or freedom would be threatened are not only inhumane and wasteful, but also, they violate U.S. legal obligations under the Refugee Convention. We strongly urge these measures be stripped from the legislation or, should they remain, that Congress reject this bill.”

**Maryknoll Lay Missioner Heidi Cerneka, an immigration attorney, said** “Expanding detention further criminalizes people who are seeking protection for themselves and their children. While the language in the supplemental may refer to deterrence, my detained clients point out that when they are shackled and told when they can and cannot shower, eat, or go outside, they are being treated like dangerous criminals. Asylum seekers have often courageously faced threats, extortion, the death of family members in a climate of violence and persecution in their countries of origin and on the journey, and yet, when they ask for asylum and protection, the very government that made such promises, only diminishes and dehumanizes them.”

**Sr. Leila Mattingly, M.M., said** “We Maryknoll Sisters on the U.S.-Mexico border are deeply troubled by the hateful rhetoric and name-calling by some politicians and their supporters who want to blame desperate people for seeking safety and reunification with their family members in the United States. Moreover, many of the people seeking asylum come from countries where U.S. sanctions and corporate interests have destroyed economic and democratic opportunities. The supplemental spending package before the Senate does nothing to build safe and sustainable communities. Instead, it includes funding for weapons of war while denying the rule of U.S. and international laws for asylum seekers.”

Maryknoll missioners call for attention to the root causes of migration. “Men and women, and especially families with children, do not expose themselves to the danger and suffering involved with seeking asylum in the United States for trivial reasons,” **said Fr. Raymond Finch, M.M.** “The majority are escaping life threatening situations. Closing the border will not solve the crisis of what is forcing them to flee. Putting more restrictions on the asylum process will not solve this crisis. There is not a fence high enough to stop people struggling for their lives.”

“Instead of a cruelty-first approach to asylum,” **Gunn said,** “we urge Congress to adopt solutions that uphold human life and dignity and benefit the common good, by expanding access to legal pathways and parole, as well as investing in services that support access to employment authorization. Doing this will help immigrants integrate into communities across the country, spreading the proven benefits that they bring to our culture and economy.”

*The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missioners, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missioners serve.*

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